



California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

We recently learned about the recommendations submitted by the Social-Science and Religion Faculty Group (SSRFG), representing a number of renowned scholars of history, education, women's studies, Asian studies, political science, comparative theology, and religious studies. After careful review, we find that the SSRFG recommendations reflect academic consensus, accuracy, equity, and cultural competency -- all factors critical to educational materials which better prepare California students for an increasingly globalized and diverse society. Accordingly, we take this opportunity to endorse the SSRFG's specific edits, and reproduce their recommendations below:

I. Endorsement of SSRFG Edits

1. The religion of India/Hinduism:

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2439:** Restore the original text from November 2015 Framework draft for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 210, line 77) i.e.: "How did the religion of Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?"
- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2480:** Replace Chapter 10, Grade 6 (pages 212-213, lines 836-837) with "Teachers focus students on the question: How did Hinduism support individuals, rulers, and societies?"

2. Nonhistorical references to the geographical area of the Indian subcontinent:

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2436:** Restore the original text from November 2015 Framework draft for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 210, line 774) i.e.: "The Early Civilizations of India"
- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2441:** Restore the original text from November 2015 Framework draft for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 210, line 783): i.e. : "In this unit students learn about ancient societies in India."
- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2454:** Restore the original text from November 2015 Framework draft for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 211, lines 811-812) i.e. "A flourishing urban civilization developed in India from as early as 3300 BCE along the Indus River."

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2459:** Replace Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 212, lines 819-821) with “Ancient India experienced a Vedic period (ca. 1500-500 BCE), named for the Vedas which were composed in Sanskrit...”

3. The role and authority of brahmins:

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2482:** Revert to this slightly adjusted version of the previously approved edit for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 213, lines 838-840): “Brahmins, that is, priestly families, assumed authority over complex devotional rituals, but many important sages, such as Valmiki and Vyasa, were not born to brahmin families.”

4. References to caste in ancient India:

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2511:** Revert to this version (possibly with a slight change) of the previously approved edit for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 213, lines 872-874): “A person belonged to a particular varna by his professional excellence and his good conduct, not by birth itself,” or alternatively and more specifically, “not by family of birth itself.”
- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2536:** Revert to this version, with a slight change, of previously approved edit for Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 215, lines 891-892): “Teachers should make clear to students that this was a social and cultural structure, rather than a foundational religious belief.”

5. The role of women:

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2544:** Replace Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 215, lines 894-895) with: “Although most of ancient Indian society was patriarchal, akin to the other ancient kingdoms and societies, women in India had a right to their personal wealth, especially jewelry, gold, and silver, but fewer property rights when compared to men.”
- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2545:** Replace Chapter 10, Grade 6 (page 215, lines 896-897) with: “They participated in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations, often with their husbands, as well as on their own.”

6. References to Hinduism versus the religions of ancient India.

- **RECOMMENDATION for Edit 2734:** Replace Chapter 11 (Grade 7, page 265, lines 703-704) with: “Building on their previous study of Hinduism in 6th grade, students study the question: How did Hinduism change over time?”

II. Concerns with Recent Phase of Framework Process

We would also like to restate for the record that we have generally been pleased with the careful review afforded the History-Social Science frameworks. However, as we brought up in our correspondence from April 15th, we are deeply concerned with the process in light of a number of developments, including the deference granted to the South Asia Faculty Group (SAFG) during the most recent phase of the framework adoption process. We are particularly concerned about the significant bias that could arise from working relationships between SAFG members and members of the “writing team” or California History and Social Studies Project (CHSSP), which seem to have circumvented an otherwise open and transparent process.

The near blanket acceptance of edits from the SAFG, despite 1) the political nature of its submission, and unfounded accusations against community efforts, and 2) the claim by the group that it represents the corpus of scholarship on India and Hinduism when it does not, are equally concerning with regard to the accuracy and equity of the most recent draft. Many of the SAFG edits that were accepted (or slightly modified and accepted) by the Subject Matter Committee at the March 24th hearing stand to override edits that were already vetted, accepted, and incorporated into the December draft. Other edits that have been accepted have inserted into the draft inaccuracies and confusion rather than academic consensus and clarity.

III. Vitriolic and Abusive Attacks on HAF

Lastly, we believe it is important to share with you for the record, the ugly politicization and vitriol directed against HAF and other Hindu American groups duly involved in the process, that has been unleashed, including from allies and supporters of the SAFG. We have been met with a sustained volley of abusive emails and social media posts directed at HAF as an entity or against Hinduism as a religious tradition, edits have been attributed to HAF that were not submitted by us, and our overtures for constructive dialogue have been met with contempt or outright rejection. Posts have also veered into personal attacks, where the Foundation’s Executive Director has been the subject of targeted and specific accusations. We sample some of these posts below:





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We at the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), in line with our commitment to dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism, continue to advocate for accuracy, cultural competence, and equity in the way in which Hinduism and Ancient India are taught. As such, it is our ardent hope and request that both the Instructional Quality Commission and the State Board of Education ensure that only an accurate and equitable History-Social Science Framework is adopted.

Thank you for your kind attention to this difficult matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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